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EDITORIAL COMMENT

It is a privilege to reprint Mr. Gaffney's presentation to secondary-school principals, "Meeting the Needs of Youth" in which he points up the importance of "some unification of the home and school" as each searches for methods of helping today's youth. His study, obtained by going to youth itself for an expression of its needs, is thought provoking; his suggestions regarding what schools can do to meet students' needs are important for study for all who are interested in and who help children through many different professional skills. In discussing what schools can do to help meet the expressed needs of students, he stresses the value of the school social worker in helping emotionally disturbed children.

From Miss Hermann's experience in the Minneapolis schools she has written, "School Responsibility for Mental Health of Children". It rightly belongs with Mr. Gaffney's article because, here again, the importance and closeness of home and school are brought into focus. In the preparation of children for living, the school has a responsibility for early identification of those children who need the special help of the school social worker and/or that of a community agency.

The Denver school social workers have contributed a playlet to the literature of school social work. Many of us search for methods of interpretation—not only may this be used as a playlet but also as reading material for school personnel.

This issue of *The Bulletin* may be of value to you in many ways as a tool in interpretation.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH¹

MATTHEW P. GAFFNEY, Superintendent of New Trier
Township High School

Winnetka, Illinois

I. Introduction

Many learned organizations have given much time to the study and presentation of the needs of youth. Most of their studies have been from the point of view of adults who look at youth and society and decide from experience and from needs of society what are the resulting needs for young people.

I thought it would be interesting to see what high school students themselves feel about their needs. This year, therefore, I sent 550 questionnaires to college freshmen and 2,500 questionnaires to high school students asking what they felt about their needs at the high school age.

I realize that the questionnaires did not go to a typical cross section of the population. Our school is in a residential suburban community with the majority of students heading for college. Questionnaires sent to students in an industrial community would differ, I am sure, in one particular. There would be much more emphasis by students on their vocational needs.

With that one exception, I suspect that the responses of young people would not be too different from one school to another. I base this opinion on the fact that I have been principal in various types of communities and have found that in their fundamental needs adolescents have a great deal in common whether they are in rural or urban areas, industrial or residential.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to imply that a curriculum for students should be built entirely on students' own expressions of their needs. I am well aware that society imposes obligations, and that adults because of their experience can see needs that students cannot yet

¹ Reprint from April, 1953 (Vol. 37, No. 194), issue of THE BULLETIN of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, N. E. A. Mr. Gaffney presented this material at a general session of the Thirty-seventh Annual Convention of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, Los Angeles, California, February, 1953.

appreciate. I do contend, however, that it would be an error not to take into account the students' own feelings of their needs. Surprisingly enough, there is not as great a difference in the two viewpoints as might be expected, although the emphasis is certainly somewhat different.

II. What Young People Say They Need

A. Overwhelmingly, the students put first importance on their personal needs. I am calling these "social" needs and will list some as they express them: the need of making friends, of understanding people, of getting into activities with other people. This feeling of the need for belonging is perhaps the most striking single expression that emerges from the reading of some three thousand questionnaires. It occurs in many variations, such as the need for learning to be unselfish, to have social confidence, to meet people easily, to learn how to act in competition, to learn how to help the less fortunate, to participate in activities, to feel useful, to grow up, to achieve maturity, to learn independence, to learn respect for others, to learn how people act in the world, to learn how to get along in society, to learn how to be good leaders and good followers, to learn friendliness, to learn good sportsmanship, to associate with others without prejudice, to meet those of the opposite sex, to have friendly association with adults, to be recognized as an individual, to learn to cooperate, to learn right attitudes toward people and ideas. Along with these are expressions of the need to develop responsibility, to make decisions, to determine one's own action, to assume group responsibility, and to become aware of moral and civic obligations and the rights of others.

It is obvious to me that when an adolescent tries to take stock of himself, he senses that he is a growing being moving from the somewhat egocentric junior high school stage into the social world of adults. He senses several very important aspects of this growth: (1) He wants to develop his capacities as an individual and to have adults and classmates interested in him as an individual. (2) He senses that he is a member of a social group and wants to belong to it. He craves to act with it, and sets his standards by those of the group. (3) He realizes that he is moving from a period of irresponsibility and dependence to a period of responsibility and independence and he craves opportunities to put this independence into action.

The reading of all these questionnaires brings home vividly the self consciousness of the adolescent, his great need for a feeling that he

belongs, his dependence on his associates, and his hope to be sympathetically understood by adults.

B. In considering their needs, students by no means overlook their academic needs. I think it is fair to say that academic needs are not emphasized as much as their personal needs, but they are mentioned. Most students indicate that their major needs in this field are to know how to study, to have good work habits, to learn how to think, to learn how to communicate in written or oral form. They mention their needs to develop the desire to learn, to have intellectual curiosity, and intellectual freedom, to gain the ability to think logically, to organize their time, to read faster, to explore many fields of learning, to gain a desire for knowledge, to understand current affairs, to give and take directions, to learn to listen constructively and intelligently to talks, plays and music, to take notes, to organize materials for examinations.

Their feeling for the need of special subject matter field is, of course, influenced either by those subjects that they took and profited from or by those of whose lack they are painfully conscious. For example, students who had courses in public speaking mention that it met a need, those who had no such courses mention the lack.

C. Their vocational needs are stressed less in our particular school study than I would expect them to be in the average school. That is to be understood because most of our students are going on to college and in their minds preparation for college and preparation for their vocations become one and the same thing. Therefore, vocational preparation is not separated as a special requirement.

D. Adolescents feel definitely the need for the development of various attitudes and appreciation. These overlap item A, but are looked at in a different way: the attitude of social confidence, the attitude of friendliness, the attitude of leadership and followership, the attitudes of sportsmanship, of curiosity, of appreciation of the fine arts, the attitude of intelligent listening, attitudes toward good citizenship, toward honesty, toward fairmindedness, toward honor and responsibility and confidence.

I was struck by the fact that adolescents feel the need for developing not only sportsmanship, but also proper attitudes toward good sportsmanship, which are not exactly the same thing.

E. Students feel great need for activities which will develop the skills in the items of A, B, C and D, and because of this they stress the desirability of student government, of a chance for everyone to be on

committees, of a multiplicity of extra-curricular activities, of social affairs, of opportunities to accept responsibilities, and to participate in the life of the school. They want opportunity for developing an honor system, and for service in a hundred different ways. This category is again another aspect of the previous ones, but from a different point of view. For example, a student feels the need for responsibility, he feels the need of having a right attitude toward responsibility, but moreover, he feels a need for highly complex organization of activities in which he can build up skills in assuming responsibility.

III. What Schools Can Do to Meet Students' Needs

Granted that these are some of the legitimate needs of adolescents, what can schools do to meet them?

A. While there are a great many specific things that can be done, I would like to say that I consider of foremost importance the philosophy and the atmosphere of the whole school. The school which has a friendly, democratic atmosphere, where there is mutual respect between administration, faculty, students and parents is a school in which proper activities can take place for meeting students' needs. It is difficult or impossible to have a good atmosphere in a classroom unless the teacher feels that there is a democratic atmosphere in the school. It is difficult for a teacher to allow students to assume responsibility, if the school system doesn't make provisions for the teacher to assume responsibility. It is difficult for the teacher to help the student to develop his capacities and his interests if the teacher himself has no opportunity to develop and to feel that he is important in the institution. This matter of atmosphere of the school is subtle and crucial.

B. I would also urge that there are needs to be met whether the students sense them or not. Schools are supported by the state, by the community, partly to meet the needs of a democratic society, and they have a responsibility to develop law-abiding citizens who will take their place in a democratic society.

Schools must pass on some of the organized wisdom of the human race, and they must meet certain state and local requirements regardless of whether students are aware of these needs. In the good school the situation will develop so that students by and large will recognize and feel these as their personal needs.

C. To come back to their self-needs, however, the one of responsi-

bility and belonging, which I'd say is universal, is one which every school can plan to meet. A feeling of responsibility is wholesome if the school can do something about it by finding legitimate outlets and activities. Otherwise, the feeling is frustrating.

Types of activity which will involve self direction and planning and evaluation are desirable. Here are a few examples of social planning that meet this need: Foremost and fundamental to the others is student government. This includes studying the financial needs of student activities, setting up and managing for these activities, organizing and conducting student-supervised study halls, holding leadership training groups for the student supervisors of these halls, providing for adolescents on Hallowe'en, perhaps by organizing and carrying out an all-school Hallowe'en party with the aid of faculty and parents, studying the recreational needs of students and trying to meet those that are not filled, organizing an honor system for a school and carrying out a series of meetings to interest the students, developing a student code of ethics, developing various drives to collect clothing or food or money for those less fortunate, controlling the student dining hall, developing a statement of student philosophy, organizing service groups and committees such as a student aid committee, usher corps, clubroom committee, traffic squad, public relations groups, committees to carry on drives, attendance collectors, information desk boys, door guards, dinner committee, inter-scholastic relations committee, library monitors, student vaudeville committee, girls' service club in aid to the nurse's office, committee of boys' and girls' athletic associations to provide student officials and student leaders for intramural sports, and service groups of seniors to help with freshman orientation.

These are just examples of the many things that students themselves will think of where they can assume responsibility, where they can carry it out, and where they have the satisfaction of working with others to achieve a common goal. Incidentally, this is one of the best ways to help race relations and the elimination of prejudice. If young people work together enthusiastically on a common project, they soon forget their religious or racial differences and think of their cooperation and the common goal they are achieving.

D. Undoubtedly, the main responsibility of the school is meeting the adolescent's academic needs. These cannot be met by expecting that every child can achieve a certain level of performance, and by attempting to force the poor up to this level while neglecting those who should be on a much higher level.

One of the great failures of the American high school at the present time is its inability to challenge able students to work up to capacity. Within the last twelve months I have met several score foreign teachers who have spent as much as six months each in this country visiting high schools. They find much to be enthusiastic about, but they are uniformly critical of our inability to challenge our better students to superior work. How can this be done? There are many ways. I personally believe in some segregated classes for superior students, provided, after the superior students are segregated, they are challenged to do superior work. Undoubtedly, able teachers in ungrouped classes can challenge superior students to do superior work. The challenge can be offered in large schools by offering electives, frankly on an advanced basis. In our school we have in the senior year two English courses patterned after the Great Books course of the University of Chicago. Children are not segregated. They enter this course purely as an elective. However, the only students who are interested in this course tend to be the more able students. It is a rigorous course with difficult materials. To require it of all seniors would be fatal. Many schools offer two courses in each science—a college preparatory course and a general course. One school that I know uses a Spanish textbook in teaching Latin American history. Only good students in Spanish are allowed to take the course. Another school that I know gives a minor course in French Conversation. This is taken by seniors who, in addition to their regular French courses, want to gain more facility in the spoken language. In our particular school we have a ninth grade course in which history, English and science are taught over a three-period span with three teachers. The students in this course are selected from the upper twenty-five per cent of the school population. They are held to a standard of work certainly some of our seniors could not achieve.

Of course this presupposes equal effort to meet the needs of the students at the lower end of the academic scale. They have just as definite needs. I am inclined to think, however, that more schools in the country have by force of circumstances had to meet the needs of the lower end of the scale than have had to meet the needs of the higher end of the scale.

Certainly a basic academic need is the achievement of the skills of learning; that is, reading, writing, and speech, and the fundamentals of mathematics, of scientific thinking, and of the fine arts. The student's present need for world understanding requires geography and courses in American history, with attention to Latin American history, Far East-

ern history, and world history. While not all students can study economics, they get economic points of view through their teachers in many other subjects. That is why it is so critically important that somewhere in this country we raise the economic literacy of our teachers. I personally do not think the solution is a required course in economics. An excellent start in this has been made by the National Committee on Economic Education headed by Mr. G. Derwood Baker. Northwestern University has sponsored, in association with the Curriculum Program of the State, workshops for the past two summers. Then this organization for the State has been willing to finance summer workshops for teachers extending over a period of two or three weeks. The hope is that a teacher who understands economic principles and is economically literate herself will give an intelligent presentation in her classes and raise the level of the economic understanding of her students, whether the course be mathematics, geography, history, industrial arts, commerce, or science.

In our school, we are working at the present time to set up a study group composed of teachers and parents and possibly students that will meet for a series of perhaps eight sessions. We hope to take a basic but relatively popular text on economics and get the group to agree to study a section before coming to each meeting. We shall have discussions with resource people to help. There will be no attempt to advocate any point of view or any doctrine but a definite attempt to create interest in economic problems and some basic understanding.

Another need expressed by some students, although vaguely, is the need of understanding and being a part of the community in which they live. I believe their school and its problems, for most students, is the dominating factor in their community, but it should not be isolated from the community in which the school is located.

Many schools at the present time are developing for certain students programs of work opportunities. For these to be of value in any way except purely for income, the work experiences must be correlated with the educational program of the school and supervised. I know a school where one teacher has direct charge, makes contacts with the employer, has conferences with the student and the employer, and checks constantly to be sure that the experience is educational and is related to the educational program. For the student who is going immediately into a vocation such an arrangement would seem to be extremely important. It helps the student to see the definite connection between the educational program and the vocational possibilities.

There is an expressed need for students to understand the civic life of their community. A movement which has gained some headway in various parts of the country by helping students feel that they are developing their ability to understand and run business is Junior Achievement. I recently visited a center located in Evanston, Illinois, and was impressed with the character of the work and with the feeling of reality that it gave the students.

Our boys at the present time feel a definite need for information and guidance about military services. There are many things that schools can do to meet this need. One person in each school can collect information and be available for conferences with students. Schools can help students to understand the remarkable services rendered by USAFI. Thousands of boys in camps are continuing their education at no expense by correspondence courses and in many camps they are encouraged to do so. If the boy knows before he leaves school, provided he leaves before graduation, that these opportunities are available and that the school will accept the results, a valuable service can be rendered.

There are certain special needs that schools can meet. In every school there are certain emotionally disturbed children. Even with the best intentions in the world, the average teacher is not technically equipped to understand or meet the needs of these children. In Illinois there exists a position known as Visiting Adjustment Counselor.² A person who holds such a position must be a trained school social worker.

The value of such work, of course, depends on the individual who has the position. I have seen one school in which something little short of a miracle has been performed with students who had not been reached in any other way. The advisers, the deans, the principal, and the teachers were trying to deal with cases as if they were normal, where the situations were not normal. It takes a person with training to study the maladjustment of a particular student, someone with time to go back into the home situation, to work with the parents, and finally to show both child and parent the nature of the problem and to advise teachers how to handle it.

Adjustment needs of students can be helped in general by good testing programs. It is always important to warn, however, that tests are only one indication and not the total picture. I have seen children with high IQs having a grievous time because of trouble, let us say with

² *Visiting adjustment counselor* is the title used in this school system for *school social worker*.

geometry, and the teacher taking the attitude that the child has superior intelligence and should be able to do superior work. Careful testing has shown that the child's general intelligence was high, largely on the verbal side, but that actually it was weak on the quantitative side and that the youngster was not capable of doing work in an advanced class, or perhaps in any class, without some more careful preparation in fundamentals of quantitative thinking. The testing program seems to be fundamental also in meeting the guidance needs in a school where most of the students are going to college. A major problem arises where a father who went to Harvard and a mother who went to Smith take it for granted that their son is going to Harvard. A careful program of testing, which over the years of the child's school development indicates a lack of academic ability but strong interest, let's say in art and abilities in art, gives objective evidence to help the boy and parent make more satisfactory plans for his future.

Some young people feel and express their need for religious and spiritual training. On the religious side public schools are at present facing a problem. The schools can at least cooperate with the churches in every community, try to be as flexible as possible in their programs, recognize the value of the child's religious life outside of the school, and emphasize its importance. There are many ways in which a school can indirectly show its appreciation of the importance of religion in the life of the child.

I know a community where the Jewish population is ten or fifteen per cent of the total population of the community. The largest auditorium in the community is the school gymnasium. For a number of years the school has given the use of this gymnasium, at a considerable inconvenience to the school, to the Jewish population for the celebration of some of its most important religious festivals. This has not only impressed the Jewish people with the desire of the school to cooperate, but it has emphasized for every student in school the importance of the religious observances of this group.

The whole question of inculcating spiritual and moral values to meet the needs of high school students is one of the important and unsolved problems of the present day.

When one becomes aware of a need of high school students, either an expressed need or one that is sensed by adults, the first and easiest solution is always to add a new course to the curriculum. I have been bothered by the fact that every time parents recognize a need, they

recommend the addition of a course in the curriculum and then someone also recommends that it be required. It has been obvious to school people that this cannot continue indefinitely.

I have a few suggestions for meeting certain needs. I know a school that has a woman in charge of musicology. She is not a member of the regular music department. She happens to be a very able woman who knows German, Spanish, French, has a background of Latin, is well grounded in history, and has given her life to the study of music. I realize that few people with this background exist but wish to illustrate what can be done. She is available in this school system to meet with a group of history classes when they are studying, let us say, the French Revolution, and show how a social upheaval affected the music of the period. She teaches how music developed, and how it was intimately connected with the life of the people. She has also found that children of first year French, or first year Spanish, or first year German, who were having difficulty with pronunciation fell into it naturally when they sang songs, so that once a month all first year French classes meet with her and sing French songs. Other schools have a similar teacher in art, who can go into a history class at the time that the history classes are studying the Renaissance and discuss with them the art of the Renaissance where it has definite bearing on the history of the time. The history of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is intimately connected in Europe with the great wave of cathedral building; here, for instance, a good art teacher can be of great value to the history teacher. In speech, which is one of the great needs in communication, a skilled teacher, who can work with students in English classrooms and with the teacher of the English group, can be extremely valuable. Such provisions do not require formation of new courses. They do require the willingness of the community and the board to supply these extra teachers.

One of the critical needs of most high school students is just meeting their expenses. Few people who do not study the situation realize the cost of a high school education to a family. In many cases it isn't merely the cost of school supplies. A senior boy in high school, for instance, is not earning money to help the family. Then there is the so-called "hidden" tuition from all the expenses that arise in keeping up with school activities. The burden for the family of low income becomes heavy. One school in a relatively large city in Illinois discovered that fifty per cent of the students were leaving school between the ninth and twelfth years. A careful study of as many of these drop-outs as they could contact was made. Three principal factors came to light: 1. Some

felt that what they were getting in school wasn't worth while. 2. Some felt that they came from the "wrong" side of town and did not belong socially. 3. Some couldn't meet the expenses. These expenses were fees for the subjects they wished to take, cost of extra-curricular activities and social affairs, gym clothing, and so forth.

One particular school tried to tackle all three problems. The curriculum was adjusted to attempt to meet the needs of these students. The board of education eliminated all extra-curricular fees. Students could attend games, plays, and class parties, and the expenses were paid by the board of education or the parents' association. Within a year the holding power of this school increased tremendously, and part of it was due to the elimination of hidden tuition.

Conclusion

The ten years ahead will bring tremendous increase in high school population.

Isn't it time we face the fact that compulsory school attendance isn't the main answer in dealing with these boys and girls?

Superior teachers, an adequate and flexible curriculum, good material facilities, a realization of the needs of society and the personal needs of boys and girls, and intelligence and ingenuity in cooperatively meeting these needs are the high points of a future program for the high schools of America.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN

LYDIA HERMANN, Chief Social Worker¹

Students Mental Hygiene Clinic, University of Minnesota

The most important people in a child's life are his parents because they give him existence and nurture him. Their nearness and the vividness of his relationship with them mold his personality structure and organize his instinctual drives into characteristic patterns. These intimate psychological bonds between parents and child condition the child to normal emotional movement or predispose him to the development of anxiety and ineffectual social behavior.

For a portion of the child's life the parents form his whole world and others—even those in the family setting—exist only in the periphery of his sphere and do not immediately concern him. Later this changes, but even though other persons assume importance the parents continue to wield prime influence. The attitudes and feelings of parents are communicated to the child and constitute reality for him. If the parents forge ties of affection with him, socializing attitudes—as a willingness to submit to limitation for his own and the common good and a readiness to extend himself to other persons in the environment—prevail. These attitudes enable a child to find satisfaction in social interchange and to accept imposed denial of his wishes. Sharing of this kind is essential to sound emotional growth.

Because the child ultimately must take his place in a larger society, he attends school where he acquires factual knowledge about a variety of matters. Here also he learns to take on responsibility for himself and to achieve a balance between his needs and their gratification particularly as these involve others in the group.

If the foundation of the child's personality is soundly laid in the family, his progress proceeds under the gentle, understanding tutelage

¹ Miss Hermann serves as mental hygiene consultant in the schools on a part-time basis. Prior to joining the University of Minnesota staff she served as mental hygiene consultant for the Minneapolis Public Schools for approximately two years. Her work was centered in one elementary school and a junior-senior high school; she focused through discussion groups with teachers on the social-emotional development of children and how to help them in the classroom setting. This project was partly financed by the state mental health program in Minnesota.

of the teacher with a minimum of struggle. If on the other hand parents, because of their own immaturities, have shirked or failed to prepare a child for skillful living, his conscious use of himself is limited.

To the school falls the task of building upon what has been started in the home. The teacher helps the child extend and amplify the wholesome principles instilled in him before he comes to school. She aids him in modifying his particular experiences without loss of status so that he retains his individuality while at the same time he accommodates himself to the values and norms of a wider social group than his family. In terms of mental hygiene this implies that the role of the school is affected by the role the parents have already played.

The school is necessarily limited in what can be done for a child's mental health. Yet, even though circumscribed, what can be accomplished is not to be minimized. In fact, the very boundaries help to clarify and direct the way in which teachers function.

First of all, the job of the teacher is *education* and never therapy. The teacher does not attempt to "cure" emotional ills. Rather, her function is to preserve equilibrium and to prevent the formation of more intense symptoms. When the child requires treatment of the "cure" type, the teacher's responsibility ceases, and someone else within the school system or in the community takes over.

But sometimes the teacher *seems* to fail in her preventive job. This is so because the teacher deals with the child only in a school setting. Although most of a child's early years are spent with his teachers, a large part of his life goes on away from the school. If the influences he encounters outside differ widely from what the teacher aspires to inculcate, the child's positive attitudes are not always easily fostered in the school. He is faced with one set of values while he is with the teacher and another set entirely when he is away from her. Which shall he choose?

If the child's behavior continues to be unacceptable, this may be because of circumstances over which the teacher has no control, factors which he will never be able to manipulate. Yet, the fact that the child's behavior does not deteriorate is important. Many a teacher, although not helping a child to find more suitable ways of behaving, preserves a current balance. A teacher is wise to ask herself when a child appears to show no improvement in his overt activity, "Is he worse?" "Has he made some effort to hold the gains he already has made?"

Twelve-year-old Jimmy, for example, had caused a variety of difficulties in school since he was in second grade. Complaints included destruction of school property, bullying other children, lying, and stealing. His parents were dead and he lived with an eighty-three year old grandmother who was arthritic and partially deaf. An uncle, sixty-seven years old, lived in the home and was alcoholic.

Mrs. Martin, Jimmy's teacher, tried hard to help him, but at the end of the term she thought nothing had been accomplished. She liked him and felt that he responded to her warmth. The last day of school Mrs. Martin spent a few moments talking with Jimmy. "I guess I haven't helped you very much, Jimmy," she said. "Whaddya mean?" he asked with surprise in his voice.

After a brief pause Mrs. Martin said, "Well, we both know that you still do some of the things that get you into trouble. I had hoped we could overcome some of these."

Inelegantly Jimmy told her, "Gee, you must be nuts, Mrs. Martin! Maybe I do get in your hair, but I ain't no worse than I was last year! Yeah, and two of the guys put on probation when I was are in the can now! So waddya make of that!"

This teacher did not accomplish what to her appeared to be a reasonable goal for a deprived child. She did, however, preserve an equilibrium which even Jimmy saw as a considerable achievement. While admitting he had not improved in the sense the teacher hoped, he had been steady enough to keep the rules of his probation. Without much help from his relatives, abiding by the probation regulations represented a real triumph for this boy and undoubtedly the teacher's friendship was an encouraging factor in his life.

Whatever the school does for a child must be performed in moderation. In a social agency or a clinic the treatment of a child can be regular and intensive. In school, attention must be shared by other children. This means that whatever progress the child makes may be slow occurring through the persistent, understanding attitudes of the teacher, through the positive social pressures he feels in belonging to his classroom group, and through the acquisition of ability to relate warmly to other people. These are accomplished by means of constant exposure to a warm, but firm, classroom climate.

What then is the school's function in the matter of mental hygiene? Broadly speaking, the job of the school is to prepare the child for living by giving him certain factual knowledge about the world in which he exists and to teach him how to apply such data constructively. This is a *sharing* process in which the teacher gives her warmth and something of her experiences. She challenges the child to explore his emotional strengths and encourages him to try out his personal resources.

More specifically this is achieved by (1) permitting the child to have feeling; (2) by aiding him to recognize and identify his feeling; (3) by showing him constructive ways of behaving. Notice in the following examples how two teachers accomplish these things:

Marie is a second grade pupil. She comes to school after lunch, and it is evident she has been crying. The teacher asks Marie if something is wrong.

Marie: My mama spanked me. . . .

Teacher: That's too bad, Marie.

Marie: (Begins to weep.) It hurt a lot. She said I was naughty, and she spanked me. . . . I hate my mama . . . she's a nasty . . . (sobs).

Teacher: You feel very bad about it.

Marie: I hate her! I hate her!

Teacher: Little girls sometimes feel like that about their mothers.

Marie: You wouldn't spank me, would you? You like me . . . (pause).

Teacher: Sometimes grown-ups have to punish children. It's to help children learn things they can do and things they can't do. That means really that we like you, and we don't want you to do things that will get you into trouble.

Marie: Sometimes I like my mama.

Teacher: Yes, sometimes we like our mothers and sometimes when we're angry we dislike them.

Marie: Maybe what I did wasn't very nice . . . like my mama says.

In this conversation the teacher makes no effort to pry into the child's relationship with the mother. She shows her sympathy by reflecting Marie's feeling. "You feel bad about it." She permits Marie to hate her mother, and a moment later she gives a fairly simple explanation of why adults sometimes punish children. This permissive attitude gives Marie sufficient release so that she is able to say, "I like my mama at times". The teacher reinforces this by an explanation of ambivalence in terms Marie can understand, and Marie begins to show some acceptance of the penalty imposed by her mother.

Bill and Joe begin a violent quarrel on the playground. The argument grows more heated and a fist fight soon is in progress. The teacher intervenes. "Now, I know you both are very angry, but you cannot strike each other this way."

Bill: It's all his fault! He said I was . . .

Joe: Aw, I did not start it! You did when you . . .

Teacher: It's hard when you both think you're right.

Bill: I *am* right! I'm going to fight him to prove it!

Joe: Yeah, you and who else? I'll beat you to a pulp!

Teacher: Do you really think that will settle anything? Will it prove anything that you really want to prove? I know you're pretty angry right now, but maybe this can be worked out a little later when you cool off a little.

Joe: I don't want to cool off. I want to bash his head . . .

Bill: Yeah, and I'm the one that's going to do that to you . . .

Teacher: No, neither of you will hit the other. I think it's too bad you don't put some of this energy into the games you play. For a little while why don't you both play a little handball and then try to talk this over?

Bill: Aw . . . ok! Come on, you big dope, I'll beat you at that!

Joe: Who says so? I'll show you!

About twenty minutes later, the teacher finds both boys still playing handball. Although they make derogatory remarks to each other, there is some laughter and the undertone of anger seems gone entirely.

Teacher: How's the game?

Joe: Pretty good!

Bill: Yeah, not bad!

Teacher: How do you feel now?

Bill: (Grins) Aw . . . I'm not mad any more.

Teacher: And you, Joe?

Joe: Ok, I guess. Come on, Bill, let's get going.

Here the teacher permits and acknowledges the intense feeling Bill and Joe have for each other, but she does not allow physical violence. By the simple expedient of the handball game, she redirects the expression of their emotional energy. They may "beat" and "bash" each other in an acceptable way—a competitive game. This teacher is at once permissive, denying, and directive. It is as if she said, "You may have all the angry feelings you want, but you may not strike each other. I will show you what you may do instead."

Teaching a child to redirect his emotional energy into constructive channels often requires imagination on the part of the teacher. Moreover, the results are not necessarily as immediate as in the instances of Bill and Joe. The teacher must repeat and repeat her lesson, and until the principle has been fully accepted and incorporated, behavior will sometimes fail to meet wholesome standards. Games, art, music, story-

telling with feeling, drama—these are but a few of the means whereby the skillful teacher enables the child to drain off his feelings. When the child learns there are numerous avenues by means of which he obtains satisfaction for intense feelings, the need to injure others and to react with hostility to persons exerting pressures lessens.

What is the role of the school social worker in supplementing the help given by the teacher? The school social worker serves as a resource person and enters into consultation with the teacher concerning methods of dealing with difficult situations. A teacher misses sound opportunity to increase her helpfulness to a child or to children in general when she does not use the specialized knowledge of the school social worker.

In conferences with a teacher, whether these are initiated by the teacher or the social worker, it is the social worker who assumes responsibility for coordinating services for the child. The social worker helps the teacher to examine (1) what she has done to help the child with his difficulty; (2) what reactions she has noted, particularly positive responses to her efforts; (3) what seems to have had appeal for a child or children; (4) what other possibilities the teacher sees for dealing with the given problem; (5) what are the teacher's personal feelings in the matter; (6) and how does the teacher see her personal reactions in their effect on the problem situation. Criticism is not involved in what the social worker does or says. She assists the teacher to identify the dynamics of her relationship with her children and to use this knowledge and understanding in a helpful way.

There are times when the school social worker can work individually with children who require more time and attention. The social worker has special skill. She can use such skill to draw off some of the intense feeling in the child after he comes to trust her. Sometimes she does nothing more than to absorb his specific hatred and his generalized hostilities and his feelings about himself and other people. He helps the child to gain some idea of his problem and what he can do about it so that he can respond in more acceptable ways with the teacher and classmates.

The school social worker serves also as a link between the school and those community agencies which can provide more intensive help than the school offers for certain children. When referrals must be made to community agencies, the social worker tries to make such referrals understood and acceptable to teachers, parents, and to the child and to alleviate as much as possible the anxiety which may center about such

referral. This may be regarded as an enabling service which, if well done, helps the family and the child to a sound use of the service of another agency.

The basic responsibility for the mental health of a child rests with his family, but later the school through sensitive, competent teachers increases the range of the child's reactions so that tensions may be released and sound balance sustained. The school, however, is limited in some ways since a child's problems result not only from school pressures but from factors outside the school's jurisdiction. Because of the large numbers of children with whom the teacher deals constantly, her fund of information about particular children is likely to be meager. While this is limiting in regard to what a teacher may do for a particular child, it is the reality. The teacher's role becomes increasingly productive when she is able to confer with the school social worker thereby increasing her understanding of a particular child.

The school fulfills the reason for its existence when it provides a learning situation by means of which the children obtain factual information which they learn to apply realistically. This includes the area of emotional development as well as the intellectual. In the emotional area teachers promote the recognition of feeling, permit its existence, but circumscribe its expression. When children learn to express their strong feelings in socially acceptable ways, they move toward maturity.

Upon occasion the problem behavior which children exhibit is conditioned largely by circumstances outside the school setting over which teachers have no control. When the teacher sees no marked improvement in a child she should not think her efforts have been in vain. At times the school social worker may be able through consultation with teachers or by means of individual interviews with children to lessen some distress. At other times, however, more intensive aid may be required for such children, and in these instances the school social worker assists the parents to use the service of appropriate community agencies.

The decisive element upon which mental hygiene—as it is taught through the formalized educational process—rests, is of course, the extent to which parents and teachers mutually support each other in aims and objectives. The best interests of children are served when there can be some unification of the home and school, for these are less separate entities than a series of progressive experiences.

Interpretation through a Playlet:

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK—WHAT IS IT?¹

LOUISE C. SPENCE, School Social Worker

Department of Pupil Personnel, Denver Public Schools, Colorado

PROLOGUE

School Social Work, what is it? Describing school social work is like the three blind men who attempted to describe an elephant. One felt the side and said, this creature is much like a wall—one felt the trunk and declared, no he is more like a rope—and the third touched the ear and said, no, you are both wrong. This animal is like a fan—all three were right according to their knowledge but none knew the whole elephant.

Lest we fall into this error, let me hasten to explain that the playlet to follow purposely picks up one situation only, in one setting, and briefly follows it through, to show you the school social worker's team relationships, and his role in helping a confused little boy make a happier and more effective use of school experience. Also, let me hasten to add that not all of our attempts to effect a change in human behavior come about as smoothly or as quickly as this playlet indicates. Often there are many more complicating factors present socially, culturally, or economically speaking. Then, too, we still have much to learn about guiding child development. The social worker's prayer might well be, "Give me the courage to change that which can be changed. Give me the humility to accept that which cannot be changed, and give me the wisdom to know the difference."

In addition to the type of problem and work shown in this playlet, the school social worker is called upon to meet many and varied demands. The problems with which we deal are school related. Our contacts are of short or long duration; minor or intensive as the situation demands or time permits. Our work is supplementary to that of the teacher who is the key adult in the school life of the child. We receive our referrals through the selection and planning with the principal or dean.

How do children express their difficulty in school? Absenteeism is a frequent symptom often indicating that all is not well on the educational scene. Absence—the ones unaccounted for by home or school, commonly known as truancy, are a cause for concern and even anxiety on the part of all of us. Why is the young child or older student truant? The school social worker seeks to find out the facts and to discover the related fears, dissatisfactions, or pressures on the part of both child and parent, and then to plan with them ways of strengthening school

¹ This script, both prologue and playlet about school social work was presented by the school social workers, Department of Pupil Personnel, Denver Public Schools, to the Family and Children's Division of the Denver Area Welfare Council, February, 1953.

attendance. Responsibility to bring chronic or extreme cases to the attention of the Juvenile Court in compliance with the state compulsory school attendance law is that of the school social worker. Then, too, the too frequent "please excuse Johnnie" notes, though not truancy, may mean help is needed in working through the real reasons for absenteeism—such as special needs at home, loss of interest, lack of money, or health. If the latter is the case, we enlist the aid of the school nurse. The school nurse and social worker are partners in many attempts to better understand student behavior.

But, in addition to the children who are absent, children who are in school every day have many needs and sometimes these needs are not being met in a way that is helpful to the child. This may be apparent to teachers, principals, nurses, deans, and counselors and such children are often referred to the school social worker.

How do children express their difficulty in school? If we leafed through the papers of a school social worker's note book we would find these illustrative referral statements made by teacher or principal. "Ralph seems more withdrawn and quieter than ever, and Rose's temper tantrums are on the increase. May I see you soon?" "Richard has high ability, but his reading retardation is becoming more and more marked." "Bernie is on the drop list. Rumor has it that he has run away." "Sally was in Juvenile Hall over the week-end. Now she is refusing to come back to school." "Carolyn is acting so queerly, lately, what can we do about it?" The school social worker gives help to these children, their parents and their teachers in many different ways. Usually this help takes the form of direct casework service to the child in school and to his parents. It is focussed on helping them to work toward the solution of their problems. The solution may involve the use of other professional services both in the school and in the community. Sometimes a full psychological evaluation is needed. This may mean a full consideration by the consulting psychiatrist, psychologist, nurse, teacher, principal, coordinate, and school social worker. The social worker helps to implement whatever recommendations may be forthcoming.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK—WHAT IS IT?

FLORENCE NOAR, School Social Worker, Denver Public Schools

SCENE I — PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Mr. Herrington: (As Mrs. Massie enters) Well, you're looking bright and sparkling today—good enough to match this lovely weather we're having, Mrs. Massie!

Mrs. Massie: (Smiling) I'm glad you think so—it's far from the way I feel! To quote the Great Gildersleeve, "this was one of my ba-ad days."

Mr. Herrington: Is that so? What happened down there in that superduper first grade room of yours? I'd always thought Carrie, that *you* were equal to any and all occasions.

Mrs. Massie: I thought so too, until today. This one really got me.

Mr. Herrington: And by "one", My dear Mrs. M., do you mean child, problem, or bubble gum?

Mrs. Massie: A little bit of all three, but chiefly . . . child! . . . You remember the youngster I told you about early in the fall (Norman Benson by name) that was so adorable but such a rogue?

Mr. Herrington: I think I do. Wasn't he the one that created quite a stir the first day of school by getting sidetracked and wandering into the kindergarten?

Mrs. Massie: (With feeling) *That's* the one! Honestly, Mr. Herrington, you would have had to see the whole thing to appreciate it fully. Norman is an absolutely handsome child. He has blond curly hair, and made the best Christmas angel this year that we have ever had. He came to school the first day wearing short velvet pants in a sort of burgundy shade. He had a little white ruffled shirt, and his grandmother had made him a bow tie to match the pants. The grandmother also brought Norman to school the first day. She explained that he had never been to kindergarten. Since he was six years old they wanted him to start in the first grade. Norman was wild with delight at the prospect of coming to school. That first morning I was taking the children on a little tour of the building, as I often do, and we passed the kindergarten. Norman looked in through the French doors and spotted the rocking horse—the huge one that was given to us by the Ramsey estate. He broke free of the line, dashed in, and leaped on that horse as if it were an Indian pony. I can see him yet, rocking vigorously back and forth, his curls flying, and the velvet pants looking very gay indeed against the horse's mane. The children just stood watching—amazed at this charge for freedom. I walked over quietly to Norman and explained that we were so glad that he liked our rocking horse. However, we did have this little trip to make with the rest of the class, and perhaps he could come back another time and ride. Norman scarcely seemed to hear me. He just kept rocking and shouting to the horse as if urging him on faster. After a few more minutes I tried lifting him down from the saddle. It proved to be a great mistake. (Both laugh) There was kicking and screaming and louder shouting than ever, and I thought that I would never get that child out of there. Well, to make a long story short, you might say the rocking horse episode has been the theme of Norman's behavior from that day on. He never walks around the room. He always gallops, assuring me that he is riding his horse but the horse never goes

quite fast enough. The other day we were having penmanship. Right in the middle, when everything was very quiet, Norman suddenly jumped up and shouted: "Who cares about spaces? I want to ride my horse!" In a very wild and uncontrolled way he grabbed the pointer from my hand, made a make-believe horse of it, and began to race around the room, slapping his side to make the horse go faster. This time I knew I had to be firm so I broke up the game, retrieved the pointer, and the lesson went on.

Mr. Herrington: Has he been any better since?

Mrs. Massie: That's just what I was getting to. He seems to have an entirely different outlook from other children on everything. And I might add—a most independent one. For example, today we started making valentines in our art period. We all agreed (that is, everyone except Norman) that each youngster would make one valentine for every child in the class plus one for his father and mother. Norman kept saying that he had to see how many he was going to get first. I tried to tell him that he could be sure of getting one valentine from each member of the class because that was what we all agreed. But he held out for his own idea.

Mr. Herrington: (Laughing) "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, eh!"

Mrs. Massie: Yes. You know Norman would not understand it; but it made me think of a verse I read in a history book once when I was a child. It was something about trade treaties between two countries. I don't even remember what countries they were. But this was the verse:

"We will not trade; we will not lend
'Til we receive—we do not send."

Mr. Herrington: Kind of a tight-fisted philosophy for six years old, it seems to me.

Mrs. Massie: And yet in other ways, Mr. Herrington, he is extremely generous. But he seems to feel a need to control his giving, just as he controls the imaginary horse he is always riding.

Mr. Herrington: In other words, you might say Norman holds the reins of life tightly and does not give them up without a fight.

Mrs. Massie: That's exactly it. When others aren't involved Norman is delightful and interesting. He has a wealth of ideas, and an excellent background for his years.

Mr. Herrington: What about his general intelligence?

Mrs. Massie: I felt it was good from the start. However, we did have a test on Norman by the school psychologist in mid-October. I brought the results in with me. He is well above average as you can see.

Mr. Herrington: I should say so. And most of the additional comments are indicative of a superior child. For example, such phrases as "rapid responses," "good memory," "vocabulary ability above the chronological age," and "a certain spontaneous precision about his judgments and evaluation." Let's see if it says anything here about his lack of conformity to rules. It would seem to me that's one of his big difficulties.

Mrs. Massie: I looked for that, too, but apparently in the testing situation where Norman was not involved with other children, as he is in the classroom, he came through pretty well.

Mr. Herrington: (Laying down the test form) What was the latest occurrence today that caused you to give up in despair? (Smiling)

Mrs. Massie: Well, we have "Show and Tell Time" the first thing in the morning. Norman told about his dog which has just been brought home from the Vet's. The dog is a black and white fox terrier. The dog had had some sort of an eye injury, and the Vet instructed the family to continue treating the eye each day by painting around it with merthiolate. The children seemed very sympathetic about Norman's dog, and all was going well until suddenly, with his rapid way of doing things, Norman pulled a bottle of merthiolate out of his left pocket and began rushing around the room smearing red around the eyes of various children to demonstrate the way his dog looks. I was way at the back. By the time I could get up to the front three children had been painted. The amazing part of it was that he got none of it into the eyes of the children; and, as far as I could see, there was nothing of showmanship about it.

Mr. Herrington: (Shaking his head) He was merely demonstrating what he had just been saying.

Mrs. Massie: And the demonstration cost *me* three notes, three phone calls to parents, and one parent conference!

Mr. Herrington: You have done a good job of understanding Norman's pattern of behavior, Mrs. Massie, and of trying to help him conform to school routine without destroying his initiative; and now instead of "giving up in despair" you seem to me to be saying you believe

he needs other special help besides what you are giving. Would you think this is a situation we could refer to the school social worker?

Mrs. Massie: Yes, I do. I would like to ask Mrs. Bloom to help us with Norman.

Mr. Herrington: Tomorrow is Mrs. Bloom's regular day at our school. Could we arrange a time in your schedule when we could talk with her together?

Mrs. Massie: I can be free at ten.

Mr. Herrington: (Writes on desk calendar) Good. Mrs. Bloom might want to make a home visit too. I think that might give us a better understanding of this youngster's unusual behavior.

Mrs. Massie: Yes, and if she would want to observe Norman, she is welcome to come in. I feel that the child has so much good within him that he deserves a chance to express it, without conflicting with so many established regulations. You know, Mr. Herrington, I realize more each year that, if we get these children early, we prevent much trouble for a lot of people, including the child himself, later on.

Mr. Herrington: I agree. What good are the three R's if, for example, a child lacks the ability to be responsible for himself—or lacks any of the ingredients of good human relationships?

Mrs. Massie: I am glad that you see it that way. I've grown very fond of Norman despite his antics. If I'm upset today, it's only because I've run out of answers to the riddle of his behavior.

Mr. Herrington: We will hope that Mrs. Bloom can help us find them. Meanwhile, get some rest and don't worry about Norman.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK—WHAT IS IT?

SCENE II — NORMAN'S HOME

Mrs. Bloom: (Knocks)

Mrs. Benson: (Opens door)

Mrs. Bloom: Good morning—Mrs. Benson?

Mrs. Benson: I am indeed! And you're the good lady who called me yesterday, I presume.

Mrs. Bloom: (Reaches out her hand) I'm glad to meet you, Mrs. Benson!

Mrs. Benson: Come right in, please. I hope it's nothing serious—about Norman, I mean.

Mrs. Bloom: Not exactly. But there have been some rough places for Norman since he started at our school, and we all want very much to help him if we can.

Mrs. Benson: I'm not surprised at what you say. It's all so new to Norman—and he's such a helter-skelter anyway.

Mrs. Bloom: You mean its *new* in the sense that it's his first school experience?

Mrs. Benson: That—and a great deal more, Mrs. Bloom. You see, Norman is adopted. We got him from an English orphanage when he was three. My husband was with the American Foreign service then, and we were living in London. Norman won us over with his yellow curls and his gaiety. There were few technicalities, and, I'm afraid, because it *was* made so easy, we didn't attempt to get much of his background—even as much as they would have given us. Six months later, we were transferred to Melbourne, Australia, from there to Hong Kong, and only this past summer, back to the States.

Mrs. Bloom: A pretty varied background for all of six years old.

Mrs. Benson: That's what I tell my husband. The child just hasn't had time to get his bearings! And the American children are still somewhat strange to him.

Mrs. Bloom: I'm sorry the school didn't know some of this the day they enrolled Norman, Mrs. Benson. It would have helped them understand much better.

Mrs. Benson: I'm afraid that's my fault. My husband's mother went over with him, and she didn't tell them very much, I guess. . . . Only that he'd never been to kindergarten. (Confidentially) You know, Mrs. Bloom, I wanted to take Norman myself, but his grandma had made him velvet pants and a ruffled shirt for the first day, and she was so excited about Norman's starting school that I just let her take him. She doesn't hear too well, and that was another difficulty I worried about.

Mrs. Bloom: Does your husband's mother make all of Norman's clothes, Mrs. Benson?

Mrs. Benson: Nearly all. She just loves to sew. But you know,

Mrs. Bloom, that's another thing that worries me. Norman keeps coming home and telling us that the other kids wear long pants made of "heavy goods," and shirts with pictures on them! I declare, I've been so busy getting settled I haven't had time to do much about it.

Mrs. Bloom: (Laughing) Perhaps I can help you there a bit, Mrs. Benson. I'm afraid it's the cowboy influence of the West that dominates what our Denver youngsters like to wear. What Norman is trying to describe to you are regular blue jeans and "T" shirts—which seem to be the standard school attire for boys these days.

Mrs. Benson: Well, you know, I wondered about that. Norman's little friends all seemed to have them on. But I thought maybe it was just for play.

Mrs. Bloom: I think you'll find they're pretty standard, and perhaps it *might* help Norman to adjust to other children better if he *looked* more like them.

Mrs. Benson: It sounds very sensible to me. . . . But tell me, Mrs. Bloom, is Norman causing trouble?

Mrs. Bloom: Well, let's say that he is *having* trouble, Mrs. Benson (smiling), in the matter of obeying and generally falling in line. You know, there's a good bit of routine about school—even in the first grade—and Norman doesn't always find it too agreeable.

Mrs. Benson: (Laughing) He doesn't at home, either, and his grandmother spoils him terribly. Then, too, we've traveled a great deal, and that's been hard for a child.

Mrs. Bloom: I can certainly understand. And you know, Mrs. Benson, Norman has so many fine, lovable qualities that we want to help him use them.

Mrs. Benson: Well, we do appreciate your interest. He is a sweet child—but sometimes a very perplexing one. Now, as far as the clothes are concerned, I will take a firm stand on that. I don't want Norman to be handicapped by looking different from the others. . . . But about his behavior now, what advice can you give me there?

Mrs. Bloom: I would certainly like to work with you on that, Mrs. Benson, and together perhaps we can find some of the answers.

Mrs. Benson: Well, I certainly would appreciate any help you can give me. Norman seems very high-strung—and very independent. And yet, I couldn't say, exactly that he's a nervous child.

Mrs. Bloom: As I observed him this morning, I felt that it was more of a quick impulsive nature that finds restrictions difficult. He is also an original and imaginative child, according to his teacher. Does he show any of these traits at home?

Mrs. Benson: He certainly does. He has one game that he plays by the hour. It is leading an orchestra. His father made him a baton once, while we were on ship-board, and his grandmother painted it for him, and Norman is very proud of it. He has nearly worn it out already leading imaginary orchestras. When we were in Melbourne, we lived near a lovely park, and Norman claimed he had both birds and squirrels in his orchestra.

Mrs. Bloom: Mrs. Massie is starting a rhythm band soon. Maybe Norman would like to try out for director!

Mrs. Benson: He wouldn't need a second invitation. Norman is anything but shy—as you probably know!

Mrs. Bloom: He has fine, confident qualities. What we want to help him do is to build them so they'll do the most for him—at the same time, not hindernig others. Perhaps, for the sharing period some time he could bring his baton and show the class.

Mrs. Benson: He'd love it. It was carved on an English ship and is painted with Chinese characters.

Mrs. Bloom: You see, Mrs. Benson, the other children would be fascinated with that, and at the same time it would be a really constructive thing for Norman. And the more of those experiences he can have, the less he will need to show his talents in less desirable ways.

Mrs. Benson: I see what you mean. And you know, he does seem to have a flair for this conducting business—for a child, I mean.

Mrs. Bloom: He well may have—and the important thing is, it is something he has chosen. When we build in that direction, we at least have the youngster's interest all the way. . . . Norman has a lot of energy. . . . We don't want to block it off—but merely channel it a little better.

Mrs. Benson: That's what I think, too. My husband seems mainly interested in Norman's report cards which, so far, have been fairly good in the actual class work. His grandmother seems mainly interested in having him dressed up all the time. . . . But I want Norman to be happy

here, Mrs. Bloom. We've moved and traveled *so* much. What does it matter how smart he is, if he doesn't get along?

Mrs. Bloom: That's very true, and, of course, it's why we have this service in the schools.

Mrs. Benson: I think it's wonderful, and I am certainly willing to try anything you suggest.

Mrs. Bloom: I think together we've made some good beginnings, Mrs. Benson. Let's use those for a starter, and see what happens.

Mrs. Benson: You don't know what it's meant to have you come here today. I was really more worried than I was willing to admit—and I couldn't talk to my husband or his mother—they just didn't seem to understand.

Mrs. Bloom: I'm glad if I could help. We all need to talk through a problem at times as you have today. Often, I think, it's easier to talk with someone outside of our immediate families—someone not quite so close to things.

Mrs. Benson: It certainly was in this case. I was just thinking: I must go right downtown this afternoon and get the jeans and "T" shirts for Norman.

Mrs. Bloom: You mean the shirts with pictures on them? (Both laugh)

Mrs. Benson: Isn't it interesting the way a child describes things? . . . And to think I didn't know how important it was. But we've been away from the "States" so long—ten years to be exact.

Mrs. Bloom: Are you glad to be back again?

Mrs. Benson: We certainly are and, as I said before, Mrs. Bloom, I want Norman to be happy here.

Mrs. Bloom: With all of us working together, I'm sure he can be—curls, blue jeans, and all!

Mrs. Benson: (Earnestly) Do you think he wears his hair too long, Mrs. Bloom?

Mrs. Bloom: Let's see how he feels in the shirt with a picture, first—a few changes at a time, perhaps?

Mrs. Benson: Now that he's older, it really *should* be shorter. But his grandmother makes such a fuss. How will I know when to take a

firm stand on that, Mrs. Bloom? How do you *ever* know when it's the right time for things?

Mrs. Bloom: It isn't easy to take a firm stand against such strong opposition. Perhaps some morning Norman will bring you the scissors himself, Mrs. Benson. *That* will be the right time to clip the curls!

Mrs. Bloom: (Rising) But you know, we only want to clip them, not eliminate them. Just as we only want to trim and train *all* of Norman's natural healthy qualities. Norman can show us the way to help him if we are sensitive to what he is telling us by his behavior and the way he responds to our efforts. Our best plan is to help him use his own strength to find the answer to his difficulties in his own way.

Mrs. Benson: I certainly hope so. But I'm going to start being more firm—I'm sure of that—and I *do* thank you for coming, Mrs. Bloom.

Mrs. Bloom: And I thank *you* for all your help and understanding. Perhaps next week you'd like to visit school, and we could talk again—at about the same time?

Mrs. Benson: I'll be there—gladly, and *goodbye!*

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK—WHAT IS IT?

SCENE III — PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE—TWO MONTHS LATER

Mr. Herrington: Good morning, Mrs. Bloom. What tidings do you bring me this fine April day?

Mrs. Bloom: Something good, Mr. Herrington—good enough to match all your poetic phrases.

Mr. Herrington: Fine, let's have it. I'm all ears.

Mrs. Bloom: Well, it's a long story—but an interesting one. It's one of the times that makes me glad I'm a school social worker. Let me get my notes so I won't leave anything out. . . . The last you heard about Norman Benson was just before you went away to that Convention meeting. I had made the first home visit, and given you the results of that. A few days later, I saw our school nurse, and discussed the youngster with her. She arranged through the mother for a physical exam with the child's own doctor. Results were completely negative. Norman is as healthy as he looks apparently.

Mr. Herrington: What about his ears? With all those curls, I should think it would be difficult to see in.

Mrs. Bloom: Oh, he doesn't have the curls any more—but that comes later. . . . The mother had agreed that Norman would be helped if he could dress a little more like other youngsters. So she sent Norman to school the morning after my first visit looking like a cross between angel and cowboy.

Mr. Herrington: I can just see him.

Mrs. Bloom: Norman's curls tumbled about over a loud plaid shirt reading: "T-Bar Ranch," and below brand new blue denim jeans he wore pointed hand-made English shoes.

Mr. Herrington: A little on the dainty side in footwear, eh?

Mrs. Bloom: Definitely. But he had made a start. And believe it or not, he was carrying a Hop-Along Cassidy lunch box! Much against the grandmother's pleas for Norman to come home to a "good hot lunch". Mrs. Benson had taken a "firm stand" as she put it, and let Norman bring it instead as he wanted to do.

Mr. Herrington: How did these external changes reflect in behavior?

Mrs. Bloom: Well, Mrs. Massie said it was really dramatic, from the very first. Once dressed in a "wild and wooly manner"—to quote his grandmother—Norman seemed less interested in galloping around the room. In other words, looking like the others was satisfying enough. The show-off needs began to disappear.

Mr. Herrington: The old "sense of belonging" we talked about.

Mrs. Bloom: Exactly. Then, one Thursday morning I was coming in the door, and there was Norman with a real boy's haircut and wearing heavy rubber soled oxfords. He showed me where there still were a few curls left on top of his head, though, and one place where his grandmother had clipped one for her memory book.

Mr. Herrington: Does the grandmother still walk to school with him?

Mrs. Bloom: No—Early in our interviews, Mrs. Benson and I agreed that Norman should come to school alone.

Mr. Herrington: Are you still seeing the mother each week?

Mrs. Bloom: Oh yes indeed. And she's been able to use the help unusually well. With a little support and encouragement she was able to be more firm with Norman in matters of ordinary discipline. She was also able to offset the grandmother's over-indulgence, gradually, without offending. These changes at home, of course, soon showed in classroom attitudes. Norman tried to cooperate, rather than braving the group alone, and he was rewarded with approval all the way around. . . . But here is Mrs. Massie. She knows this phase much better than I do.

Mrs. Massie: Well, all I can say is, it's unbelievable! I wouldn't know the youngster, and I really think he's happy!

Mrs. Bloom: The first day I saw Mrs. Benson, she said that's what she wanted most for Norman.

Mrs. Massie: We have the rhythm band well under way now. Norman was a little too skittish for director at first. But he played a tambourine and did it well. Then one day, I let him tell about his baton in Show and Tell Time, as you had suggested, Mrs. Bloom. The children loved it, and they themselves wanted Norman to try leading the band again. This time he was more controlled and sure of himself, and now he is one of our regular leaders.

Mr. Herrington: How is his actual classwork?

Mrs. Massie: A great deal better—and more consistent. His art is very good—very different. And his singing voice is clear and bell-like.

Mrs. Bloom: All the way through, it has seemed that the aesthetic things appealed to Norman—and we've built on those. But what about routine and requirements?

Mrs. Massie: They are still Norman's weakest points. But considering where he was at the beginning, he has progressed about as fast as we could ask, I think.

Mr. Herrington: I'm glad to hear you say that, Mrs. Massie. I sometimes think if we'd view a child in relation to himself, along with all the other norms, we'd have a far more balanced picture.

Mrs. Bloom: We certainly would, and we would save ourselves a lot of useless prodding at the wrong times. . . . Take Norman's case, for example: The home came part way, the child part way, and the school part way. Eventually, all three met.

Mr. Herrington: And you might say the common meeting ground

constituted Norman's area of adjustment—the modification of his behavior to more nearly fit our demands.

Mrs. Massie: And the interesting thing is—he's so much happier now that he is conforming rather than opposing.

Mrs. Bloom: Of course, he is. He has status, and approval, and an inner sense of making good. That all adds up to mental health.

Mrs. Massie: Your stock in trade—and are we glad we have you, Mrs. Bloom! I was nearly at my wit's end when I first referred Norman. And yet he was so lovable—I couldn't see him fail!

Mr. Herrington: The margin of failure for a child seems mighty narrow at times.

Mrs. Bloom: And yet, I like to think it's in exact proportion to the understanding of the adults who are trying to help.

Mrs. Massie: (Admiringly) And to their skill—it takes that too, Mrs. Bloom.

Mrs. Bloom: I think we *all* have brought our various skills to bear upon this problem. I could not have succeeded with Mrs. Benson half so well had not both of you supported all my efforts.

Mr. Herrington: We did a good job all the same, Mrs. Bloom. And we did it without robbing the youngster of his native *essence* in the process. That's what I like the best. Norman is still gay and enthusiastic. But he's more controlled.

Mrs. Massie: That's the magic trick, isn't it, Mrs. Bloom?

Mrs. Bloom: Perhaps it may seem so at times. With one slight revision: It's the child who has the magic, always; and the adults who *sometimes* know the tricks. . . Enough at least to help him find his way.

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